One woman recalled how a fellow college student who had had an illegal abortion was too frightened to tell anyone what she had done. She locked herself in the bathroom in her dorm and quietly bled to death. In another incident, 28 year old Geraldine Santoro bled to death on the floor of a Connecticut hotel room after she and her former lover attempted an abortion on their own. The former lover, who had no medical experience, used a textbook and some borrowed tools. When things went terribly wrong, he fled the scene, and Santoro died alone. 8

RELIGION AND POLITICS

MANY RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS that had previously been silent on abortion increasingly felt compelled to address the issue. Protestant churches varied in their opinions. Many supported some variation of the ALI's position, but some went even further. The United Methodist Church, for example, acknowledged "the sanctity of unborn human life," but nonetheless proclaimed that because "we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and wellbeing of the mother, for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy," we "support the removal of abortion from the criminal code, placing it instead under laws relating to other procedures of standard medical practice." 9

Similarly, the American Baptist Convention came to the conclusion in 1968 that abortion should be a matter of "responsible personal decision" and should be available as an "elective medical procedure" at the "request of the individual" at any time before the end of the first trimester of pregnancy.10

Three years later, the more conservative evangelical Southern Baptist Convention endorsed the ALI's approach and called on Southern Baptists to support laws that would permit abortion "under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental, and physical health of the mother."11 Although some evangelicals maintained that abortion was condemned in the Bible, most took a more moderate approach. The National Association of Evangelicals, for example, expressly endorsed "the necessity for therapeutic abortion to safeguard the health or the life of the mother."12

* The former lover pled no contest to manslaughter and served a year in prison.

The Catholic Church, on the other hand, continued to insist that abortion was always and unequivocally forbidden, even when necessary to save the life of the woman. As Pope Paul VI made clear in 1968, "abortion, even for therapeutic reasons," is "absolutely excluded."[13]

THE POLITICS of abortion began to play out in surprising ways. Because Catholics had traditionally identified with the Democratic Party, and because Catholics were more likely than others to oppose abortion, Republicans in the 1960s were more "proabortion" than Democrats. As late as 1972, 68 percent of Republicans and only 59 percent of Democrats thought that "the decision to have an abortion should be made solely by a woman and her physician."

The Democratic Party, however, was officially more proabortion than the Republican Party. Republican leaders, seeing an opportunity to draw disaffected Catholics away from the Democrats, began to move toward a more antiabortion stance. They knew that if they could succeed in this effort, they might bring about a profound shift in the future of American politics.

This strategy was clearly evident in President Richard Nixon's policies. In 1970, Nixon authorized all military hospitals to perform therapeutic abortions. A year later, however, with a clearer sense of the potential political ramifications of the abortion issue, Nixon revoked that policy. Influenced by Republican Party strategist Kevin Phillips's popular 1969 book *The Emerging Republican Majority,* Nixon now sharply attacked the Democrats for their support of abortion and embraced an increasingly strident antiabortion stance in a determined effort to draw Catholic voters into the Republican camp.

On May 5, 1972, for example, Nixon publicly repudiated the proabortion recommendations of the Rockefeller Commission's *Report of the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future.* In light of the growing concern about overpopulation, Nixon had appointed the Commission, which was chaired by John D. Rockefeller III, to address the "serious challenges to human destiny" posed by the growth in world population. Noting the large number of deaths due to illegal abortions and the importance of a woman's freedom to control her own fertility and destiny, the Commission supported measures to bring abortion from "the backrooms to the hospitals and clinics of this country." The Commission concluded that "the matter of abortion should be left to the conscience of the individual concerned, in consultation with her physician."[14]

Nixon emphatically rejected the Commission's recommendations, declaring that more flexible "abortion policies would demean human life."[15] A few days later, Nixon under cored the point when he made public a letter to Terence Cardinal Cooke expressing his ardent support for the Cardinal's antiabortion advocacy. Nixon proclaimed that more permissible abortion policies would be "impossible to reconcile with either our religious tradition or our Western heritage " and he applauded those who defended "the right to life of the unborn."[16]

Nixon knew what he was doing. Millions of Catholics who were prepared to cast singleissue votes on the abortion issue voted Republican for the first time in 1972, helping Nixon win a landslide victory over the Democrats' prochoice candidate, George McGovern, in that year's presidential election:[17]

THE RISING VOICE OF THE 'WOMEN'S MOVEMENT'

THE PUSH TO REFORM abortion laws in the earlytomid1960s focused almost exclusively on the authority of doctors to make medical decisions in the best interests of their patients. The notion that women might themelves have an independent and legally protected right to control their own bodies and destinies had not yet surfaced. Women's rights groups still did not place abortion high on their agendas, focusing instead on promoting equal access to education, equal opportunities in the workplace, and other policies that would enhance the standing of women in society. Near the end of the decade, however, the rising voice of the women's movement began for the first time to shape the public discourse on abortion.[18]

This shift was energized by the often aggressive activism of student groups on college campuses in the late '60s. In 1969, for example, Heather

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• Nixon's strategy proved quite successful. In the five presidential elections between 1952 and 1968, the Democratic nominee received an average of 65 percent of the Catholic vote. In the five presidential elections between 1972 and 1988, the Democratic nominee received an average of only 48 percent of the Catholic vote. By contrast, the percentage of Protestants voting Democratic in those elections dropped only slightly, from 42 percent to 39 percent. This dramatic change in Catholic voting patterns produced a shift of an average of more than three million Catholic votes from the Democratic to the Republican column in each presidential election between 1972 and 1988. This shift in Catholic voting patterns has remained more or less in place ever since. Indeed, no Democratic presidential candidate has received a majority of the votes of white Catholics since 1972.